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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses what is perhaps the most overlooked, understated, under-rated aspect of the contemporary elementary school syllabus--the virtually forgotten 4th "R," recitation. The paper's overview points out that this component of the integrated language arts curriculum is typically deemed to be substantially subordinate when compared or contrasted to either reading or creative writing. The paper also notes that, although children often receive guidance on oral reading skills and expository writing performance, they get very little, if any, feedback on their public speaking skills. It states that it is imperative that children learn to effectively communicate with a wide variety of audiences in different situations. The paper argues that children must become empowered to express their opinions if they are to achieve success, leadership skills, and to formulate strategies in becoming influential and persuasive. The paper offers sample forms and materials that deal with: public speaking analysis, ideas for practice in public speaking, public speaking simulations, common errors observed, tips for practice, public address format, prominent and effective communicators, read alouds, public speaking careers, staging an event at school, and oral recitation ideas. (CR)

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PUBLIC SPEAKING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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PUBLIC SPEAKING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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PUBLIC SPEAKING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

OVERVIEW

"THE NEGLECTED 4TH 'R' (RECITATION)"

Perhaps the most overlooked, understated, under-rated aspect of the contemporary elementary school syllabus deals with the virtually forgotten 4th 'R' or recitation! Indeed, this component of the integrated language arts curriculum is typically deemed to be substantially subordinate when compared or contrasted to either reading and/or creative writing. Children often receive very little-if any-feedback on their public speaking skills/needs. By contrast, they frequently receive guidance as per their oral reading and expository writing performance. This fact, coupled with a minimal or non-existant "game-plan", places children at a disadvantage in terms of learning to speak confidently and authoritatively in public. Youngsters that are particularly shy or inhibited may very well be at a tremendous disadvantage from an early age on with respect to avoiding basic public speaking situations and opportunities.

It is imperative that children learn to effectively communicate with a wide variety of audiences! They must learn to express themselves in different situations and with different people. A young person should learn how to speak-up and articulate their mind-set or preferences be they at home or in school or in the community. Children must become empowered to express their opinions if they are to achieve success, leadership skills, and to formulate strategies in becoming influential and persuasive!

Pupils in the elementary grades need to practice the art of public speaking and we need to provide a 'feeback loop' so that they may polish and refine their efforts. We further need to be sensitive to the developmental needs/profiles/timetables that children manifest vis a vis recitation requirements. We must pay more attention to the public speaking persona and 'comfort level' that each child uniqely exhibits. We need to insure that individual students have significant speaking experiences that are commensurate with their abilities. Parents and educators need to collectively encourage boys and girls to "take a chance" and learn how to finesse the awkward moments that all speakers face sooner or later. In essence, we must elevate this 4th "R" to top drawer status!!!

OVERVIEW (continued):

This workshop on "Public Speaking Opportunities for Elementary School Students" is designed to raise the conciousness of teachers, administrators, and parents as to the importance of developing the speaking skills of young children. We need to have an orientation that promotes the concept that learning to speak in public is every bit as important as learning to read, learning to write, and learning to compute! It is crucial that we approach this issue in an organized, coherent and non-haphazard way. Children must ultimately learn to be prepared to "volunteer" for periodic public speaking challenges as well as to feel comfortable when asked to recite in a non-volunteer capacity (ie. when the teacher randomly calls on you and your hand was not up). Regardless of where a child sits on the developmental continuum s(he) will ultimately benefit and prosper if they are able to handle the anxiety of speaking in public.

In closing, it might be appropriate to focus on the words of the legendary George Bernard Shaw:

"The greatest problem of communication is the illusion that it has been accomplished". Each and every day youngsters- as well as adults- must face the prospect of talking in a public forum of some type. The question is whether one will be adequately prepared for the rigors of this fact of life. We need to merge our collective energies and talents in this pedagogical endeavor if we are to best serve the young people entrusted to our care.

PUBLIC SPEAKING ANALYSIS

PUPIL_____ DATE_____

AGE_____ GRADE_____ TEACHER_____

SCHOOL_____ DISTRICT_____

TOPIC/ACTIVITY_____

TYPE OF PRESENTATION_____

PROPOSED TIME LIMIT_____ ACTUAL TIME_____ + OR -

AUDIENCE (DESCRIBE)_____

PUPIL (SELF ANALYSIS):

STRENGTHS TO MAINTAIN:

SKILLS TO WORK ON:

PUBLIC SPEAKING ANALYSIS
(GRADES 4-6)

PUPIL_____ GRADE____ DATE_____

SKILLS ASSESSMENT:_____ NOTES:___

STANCE & POSTURE

VOICE QUALITY-(including volume, articulation, rate of speed/delivery, tone and pitch, use of modulation/inflection, accents (natural or staged),etc.

EYE CONTACT WITH AUDIENCE

GESTURES & BODY LANGUAGE

ENERGY LEVEL (PROJECTED) & ENTHUSIASM

LENGTH OF PRESENTATION+ADHERENCE TO TIME LIMITS

TIMING & PACING + TRANSITION TO SEGMENTS

USE OF AUDIO/VISUAL RESOURCES

USE OF CUE CARDS OR NOTES

ACCURACY AND PRESENTATION OF FACTS, DETAILS, RESEARCH

ORGANIZATION (SEQUENCE) OF CONTENT & CREATIVITY

EFFECTIVENESS OF OPENING & CLOSING

MEMORY/RECALL

SPEAKER 'COMFORT' WITH AUDIENCE

AUDIENCE REACTION

SELF ANALYSIS (STRENGTHS & NEEDS)

IDEAS DESIGNED TO GIVE ELEMENTARY PUPILS PRACTICE IN PUBLIC SPEAKING

-ANNOUNCER/BROADCASTER (SIMULATIONS)
Stadium/arena, auctioneer, public address (PA) at railroad-airport-bus depot, narrator, DJ (disco), newscaster, play by play (or color) announcer, 'critic's corner' host, game show host, master of ceremonies (party/event/show-showcase), audio dub over video

-CHORAL (GROUP) RECITATION(S)
Reciting classic or contemporary or favorite poems, passages, verses, prose

-SIMULATED PHONE CONVERSATIONS
Calling the operator, calling for information, reporting an emergency (911), leaving a message (answering machine)

-RECITING NURSERY RHYMES
Also putting books, newspapers, magazines on audio or video tape

-PARTICIPATION IN READ TO ME CLUBS
Volunteering to read to classmates, younger children, pupils with special needs (Re: books/short stories)

-DIALOGUE READING(S)
Preparing a scene from a movie, play, TV show

-DEBATING
Engaging in formal & informal debates on contemporary topics/issues- learning to take both the pro/con sides of an "argument"

-SHOW & TELL (ALSO KNOWN AS 'BRING AND BRAG')
Reciting in front of the class or group- describing a treasured object or discussing an excursion or experience

-GIVING ORAL BOOK REPORTS & BOOK REVIEWS
Discussing or critiquing a favorite or required book (title) or author

-STAND-UP COMEDY
Telling jokes, humorous stories, funny anecdotes, performing monologues, laughable skits

-IMPROVIZATION
Learning to improvize with little or no rehearsal time- thinking quickly on your feet- handling 'spontaneous' speaking situations- stimulus/response exercizes

-SIMULATIONS
Explaining how to do or make something; practice giving directions to someone who is either lost or new to a particular place/area

-STORYTELLING
Telling or retelling a personal experience, claasic story, creative adventure

-RECITING TONGUE TWISTERS

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-RECITING POEMS/VERSE (from the classics or contemporary genres)

-SALES SIMULATIONS & TECHNIQUES
Telephone, tele-marketing, TV-Radio Ads/Spots, acting as a spokesperson (model) for a company product or service

-GIVING SPEECHES (On a prepared, pre-arranged topic)
Political speech, speech to convince or persuade; simulated press conferences with question and answer sessions

-MAKING A COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS
Speaking at graduation exercizes; making announcements

-TALK SHOW FORUM/FORMAT
Practice in giving or conducting interviews

-TEACHING/LECTURING ROLE PLAYING
Pretending to teach a class or specific lesson

-LEGAL/JUDICIAL SIMULATIONS
Courtroom role playing- judge, prosecutor, plaintiff, defendant, attorney, court reporter (Court TV)

-INTRODUCTIONS
Practice in introducing someone or something new; ice-breaking techniques

-ASSERTIVENESS TRAINING & PRACTICE
Social skills training; learning to say NO (Just Say No); negotiating, bargaining, controlled anger; saying NO to the unwelcomed advances of strangers

-LET'S PRETEND & ROLE PLAYING
Participating in poetry readings, 'marathon' author readings, etc.

-FASHION SHOW NARRATION
Adding commentary to visual presentations; art gallery guided tours, etc.

-MIME/PANTOMIME/CHARADES

-VOICE-OVERS' & DUBBING

-OTHER IDEAS
Singing, signing (for the deaf, hearing challenged), coaching, vendor at the ballpark or market, participating in discussion groups (book chats), other stage performance(s) which involve some degree of public speaking, read aloud stories, analysis of video or audio tapes

-YOUR IDEAS (List)

PUBLIC SPEAKING SIMULATIONS

A"baker's" dozen for public speaking practice:

1. INTRODUCE A NEW ACQUAINTANCE

2. PREPARE A 3-5 MINUTE TALK ON ANY SUBJECT

3. GIVE A 30-60 SECOND ADVERTISING COMMERCIAL/INFOMERCIAL

4. PARTICIPATE IN A DEBATE ON A SPECIFIED TOPIC

5. DELIVER A 3-5 MINUTE POLITICAL/CAMPAIGN SPEECH

6. RECITE A POEM (WITH NOTES OR FROM MEMORY)

7. SIMULATE A SPORTS BROADCASTER AT AN EVENT

8. RECITE THE PLEDGE OR LEAD AN AUDIENCE (IN THE PLEDGE)

9. PRACTICE GIVING SOMEONE INSTRUCTIONS OR DIRECTIONS

10. PRACTICE LEAVING A MESSAGE- ANSWERING MACHINE

11. CONDUCT A JOB INTERVIEW

12. TALK ABOUT A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

13. DESCRIBE A TRIP YOU HAVE TAKEN

ADD TO THIS LIST:

COMMON ERRORS/PROBLEMS FREQUENTLY OBSERVED IN ELEMENTARY PUPILS VIS A VIS INITIAL PUBLIC SPEAKING EXPERIENCES

-LACK OF PRACTICE/REHEARSAL/PREPARATION
-FACE CONCEALED BY PAPER OR BOOK
-POOR OR INAPPROPRIATE STANCE & POSTURE
-SPEAKING VOICE (TOO SOFT/INAUDIBLE)-MAY ALSO INCLUDE LACK OF MICROPHONE AMPLIFICATION
-LACK OF ENTHUSIASM/INTEREST IN SUBJECT MATTER
-IN A RUSH TO GET ON & GET OFF (THE STAGE)-TALKING FAST
-NOT TAKING ADVANTAGE OF USING PROPS OR AUDIO-VISUAL RESOURCES TO ENHANCE PRESENTATION
-PRESENTATION PERCEIVED AS TOO LONG OR TOO SHORT
-LIMITED OR NON-EXISTANT EYE CONTACT WITH AUDIENCE
-LIMITED OR MARGINAL LEAD-UP ACTIVITIES TO PREP FOR FEATURED SPEAKER ROLE

ADD TO THIS LIST:

PRACTICE MAKES ~~PURRFECT, PERFICT~~ PERFECT

TIPS:

- PRACTICE-PRACTICE-PRACTICE!!!
- REHEARSE WITH A FRIEND OR RELATIVE
- PRACTICE WITH A TAPE RECORDER OR VCR OR SUB-VOCALIZE
- REHEARSE WITH A MIRROR AND SIMULATE "EYE CONTACT"
- PRACTICE PRONOUNCING ESPECIALLY CHALLENGING WORDS, NAMES, PHRASES
- UTILIZE FACIAL EXPRESSIONS & BODY LANGUAGE/GESTURES
- ORGANIZE YOUR MATERIALS FOR EASE OF RETRIEVAL
- WATCH OUT FOR BLOWING FANS, POOR LIGHTING, SUN-GLARE, BACKGROUND NOISE, ETC.
- CONSIDER YOUR POSTURE & STANCE
- TRY TO PERIODICALLY/FREQUENTLY ESTABLISH EYE CONTACT WITH YOUR AUDIENCE
- TRY TO COMMIT SOME DIALOGUE TO MEMORY- TRY TO BE OCCASIONALLY SPONTANEOUS
- KEEP YOUR FOCUS AND STAY ATTENTIVE- DO NOT LET DISTRACTIONS BREAK YOUR CONCENTRATION
- WATCH YOUR RATE OF SPEED
- SPEAK UP! REMEMBER TO MODULATE YOUR VOICE AND "PUNCH" KEY WORDS & PHRASES
- DON'T GET FLUSTERED, EMBARRASED IF YOUR MAKE A MISTAKE- MAINTAIN YOUR COMPOSURE
- UTILIZE "HUMOR" AND LEARN TO "ROLL" WITH AWKWARD MOMENTS
- DRAFT A STRONG, SIGNIFICANT OPENING/INTRODUCTION AS WELL AS A DRAMATIC AND EMPHATIC CONCLUSION (IF POSSIBLE)
- ENJOY YOUR PUBLIC SPEAKING EXPERIENCE! TRY TO CAPTIVATE YOUR AUDIENCE
- LOOK FORWARD TO RECEIVING FEEDBACK AS TO YOUR PERFORMANCE- EMBRACE CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM IN A POSITIVE WAY- USE SUGGESTIONS TO ENHANCE YOUR NEXT SPEAKING OPPORTUNITY

- ADD TO THIS LIST:

THE PUBLIC ADDRESS FORMAT

A wonderful (and safe) venue to practice public speaking skills is the radio studio environment where the public address announcements emanate from. The child (or group) gets significant opportunity in talking to a very large group/audience but without hundreds of sets of eyes transfixed on them.

Keep in mind the following tips and suggestions in helping pupils to prepare for this experience:

1. All children should be encouraged to participate (getting a chance every so often). Youngsters may volunteer to do a "solo" or, if more comfortable, a chorale reading.

2. There is no substitute for PRACTICE-PRACTICE-PRACTICE!!! Give the script(s) out well in advance and encourage both home and school rehearsal.

3. Make sure the child(ren) are comfortable in pronouncing "big words" and especially names.

4. Engage staff members (especially the speech teacher &/or reading specialist) to assist pupils with special needs. Coaching and confidence building is so very important in this process.

5. Remind speakers to talk slowly and with adequate volume. Try to avoid the two most common "problems" which are too rapid a delivery and/or inaudible (hushed) speaking tones.

6. Audition speakers for significant/featured roles. Provide youngsters with exceptional abilityskills positive leadership opportunities.

7. Praise and reinforce the efforts of all speakers! Continue to provide speakers with ever challenging assignments (and greater responsibility).

8. Help speakers develop relaxation techniques in order to cope with pre-speech jitters and anxiety. Consult with the school psychologist if you encounter a child with a "phobic" profile or severe stage fright syndrome.

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PROMINENT INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATORS

There are people- living or deceased- who are so charismatic and so successful in the art of expressive communication. These individuals may come from any of the following clusters:

-relatives
-friends
-co:workers (or a supervisor)
-TV/Radio/stage/Movies (personalities &/or actors)
-clergy (preachers)
-politicians & government officials
-school teachers/leaders
-military officials
-etc

What is it about these individuals that captures our attention, imagination, and focus? Is it the message or is it the "technique" (or perhaps is it a combination of the two)???

Jot down the name(s) of a few speakers who impress you and specifically list those qualities/ characteristics that you find so appealing? How might you coach your child/pupil to use some of these most successful methods in developing a public speaking "persona"?

"READ ALOUD WITH THE ....."

Students really enjoy 'Read Alouds' in class. They love to listen to their teacher or other guest members of the faculty read to them. In turn, children enjoy the opportunity of reading to other classmates or younger pupils.

Encourage your school to start a "Read TO Me" club or program. Youngsters in grades 5 or 6 (for example) could be paired with a "buddy" in the first grade. The children can meet once a week for 15-20 minutes to read to one another and form a positive relationship and bond. This project can be subsequently modified to incorporate other curricular joint collaborations (eg. creative writing).

You might also launch a "book chat" type of club or organization whereby kids meet periodically to discuss a book or author.

Parents are urged to encourage their children to participate in these types of formats which provide young people with very pleasant, non-threatening public speaking experiences.

PUBLIC SPEAKING CAREERS

A partial list of occupations/careers which involve substantial public speaking:

TV or RADIO (ON-AIR) BROADCASTING

ACTING (TV; MOVIES; STAGE)

PUBLIC ADDRESS ANNOUNCER

LAW (TRIAL ATTORNEY)

POLITICIAN

CLERGY/ MINISTRY

TEACHING

TRAVEL/TOUR GUIDE

PROFESSIONAL NARRATOR

MUSEUM GUIDE

COACH

LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL

SALES & MARKETING (ALSO, ADVERTISING & PUBLIC RELATIONS)

TELEPHONE OPERATOR/SALES- OFFICE RECEPTIONIST/SECRETARIAL WORK

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP (INCLUDING ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP)

ADD TO THIS LIST:

Consider asking a local resident who does considerable public speaking to address the children on successful communication skills and strategies.

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STAGING A PUBLIC SPEAKING EVENT AT YOUR SCHOOL

RECOMMENDATIONS:

A. Set a "theme"- establish an ad-hoc committee to plan the event

B. Ask for "volunteer" speakers- pupils, staff, parents, alumni, senior citizens, members of local acting/dramatic organizations, celebrity residents, community residents engaged in public speaking careers, etc.

C. Encourage a wide/diverse range of presentations- combine both original pieces and classics

D. Incorporate several "choral" pieces for everyone to join in (both the featured speakers and the audience)

E. Consider adding a few props/costumes/special lighting-sound effects to make the program more entertaining & visual

F. Try to balance serious/dramatic readings with light/airy/funny material

G. Consider making a special tribute/dedication to someone in the audience (a surprise gesture of good-will)

H. Carefully orchestrate time dynamics- re: presentations/intermission(s)

I. Make sure to double-check lighting & sound system! Also check for audience sight lines to the stage/performing area(s). Be sure that children/adults of small stature can be seen by audience.

J. Unless doing a debate- keep the event non-competitive (encourage people to share and participate!!!

ORAL RECITATION IDEAS

THE FOLLOWING SAMPLER REPRESENTS A CROSS-SECTION OF BOTH CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY CHILDRENS' LITERATURE TITLES WHICH MAY BE UTILIZED FOR PUBLIC SPEAKING EXPERIENCE PRACTICE.

CONSIDER THESE VARIABLES:

- RECITE FROM MEMORY OR READ FROM A SCRIPT
- VARY THE SIZE OF THE AUDIENCE (EG. WITH A FRIEND OR TEACHER. WITH A FEW CHILDREN. WITH THE CLASS OR GRADE LEVEL. WITH YOUNGER PUPILS IN THE SCHOOL. AT AN ASSEMBLY. ETC.
- USE SOME PROPS OR COSTUMES TO "LIVEN-UP" THE RECITATION

A FEW POTENTIAL RESOURCES THAT SHOULD PROVE PLEASING TO THE AUDIENCE:

PAUL REVERE'S RIDE	LONGFELLOW
THE WRECK OF THE HESPERUS	
TREES	KILMER
CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE	TENNYSON
ANNABEL LEE	POE
THE RAVEN	POE
IF	KIPLING
CASEY AT THE BAT & CASEY'S REVENGE	THAYER & WILSON
OH CAPTAIN. MY CAPTAIN	WHITMAN
GETTYSBURG ADDRESS + PREAMBLE (CONSTITUTION)	LINCOLN
NURSERY RHYMES	ANONYMOUS
SICK + THE CROCODILE'S TOOTHACHE + FOR SALE + HECTOR THE COLLECTOR + BOA CONSTICTOR	SHEL SILVERSTEIN
IF I WERE IN CHARGE OF THE WORLD	VIORST
TYRANNOSAURAUS WAS A BEAST	PRELUTSKY
BLEEZER'S ICE CREAM	PRELUTSKY

ADD OTHER POEMS. PIECES TO THIS LIST:

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